

**VIP2 MENTORING NETWORK INITIATIVE**  
**Recommendations & Report**  
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**VIP2 Mentoring Network Initiative**

**The Initiative:**

An element of the Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) Virginia Innovations in Pollution Prevention (VIP2) Program is the Virginia Environmental Mentoring Initiatives. The Mentoring Initiative's mission is to foster and promote volunteer mentoring and communications on environmental topics through out the commonwealth.

Mentoring can help business, government, industry and institutions achieve environmental compliance, access appropriate incentives and improve environmental management system performance. The mentoring initiative needs to provide Virginia with overarching leadership for mentoring in general, as well as strategic planning and promotion for mentoring activities.

Some of the key ideas that were adopted in developing an implementation plan for this initiative were...

- Keep a very open audience to encompass all who wish to participate
- Mentoring as well as peer to peer communication are extremely important
- Utilize and promote existing mentoring as much as possible
- Mentoring, environmental management systems and environmental excellence are all intertwined and hard to separate.

- There is already a wealth of resources available through Internet regarding environmental information in Virginia
- The Internet can be accessible for people who do not have PC, if we establish a help network to provide alternate access methods
- A web based program will allow easy access and self-help without being manpower intensive for continued operation.

#### **Audience:**

It is the intent to insure that we are inclusive and not exclusive as a help group. Traditional thought identifies the needs of businesses and Industries, with the understanding that smaller businesses have fewer resources and may have differing and increased needs. Many governmental units that are also service providers (such as a sewer/water district, a transportation provider, etc.) and can also benefit and provide assistance. Schools and universities from academic as well as operational perspectives would be welcomed participants. Clubs and organizations because of either topic interest or activities may choose to participate. In the final analysis, anyone with an interest is welcome.

#### **Objective:**

Establish a voluntary program to foster and increase voluntary mentoring as well as increase peer to peer communication to improve on pollution prevention, environmental management systems, compliance assistance as well as related technical assistance.

#### **The Gatekeeper:**

The overarching responsibilities for promoting in all DEQ program areas and implementing these broad-based voluntary mentoring in Virginia, lies with DEQ. These responsibilities include mentoring resource identification, mentoring resources development, and matchmaking. In a sense, DEQ would tend the gate between the answers and assistance providers on one side and those discovering they need help on the other. The role is not to regulate traffic but to encourage clients to ask how they can do things better and to enhance the resources in Virginia for helping clients find answers. DEQ should act as a catalyst that encourages building networks of mentors focused on specific topics, as well as promotes networking of mentor programs.

#### **Metrics:**

Because of the wide variety of activity a single measurement may be difficult. One simple measurement would be to monitor the activity on the Website. Other means of measurement will require development of reporting/tracking systems. A voluntary feed back form will be developed to help quantify the effectiveness of the programs. In all cases a personal contact will be an optional method to input. Success stories and best practices will be promoted to share the knowledge and to help promote the network.

## **The Tool:**

The tool to organize, document and allow easy access to this wealth of information is a website on the Internet. The use of a website makes the information accessible to most large business and governmental units as well as many small businesses.

A help network must be established to meet the needs of smaller businesses without computer resources. It is thought that trade associations, public libraries, community colleges and DEQ would initially make up this network, where people could call and talk to a person who could go to the web site and print out the information they requested. DEQ will need to establish a contact person with a toll free number who can assist those with out computer access; this individual must have good communication skills and have a working knowledge of the environmental mentoring network. The requested information could then be faxed or mailed to the requestor. This is an ongoing manpower requirement.

There are additional issues that require resources that must be addressed to facilitate the development of these database tools to support the network. Software that will allow easy Internet based search and print capabilities will be needed. System requirements for both hardware and software must be adequate for the size of the databases and number of potential users, to insure a relatively fast response time and easy access to network. The web site must be user friendly and provide adequate help screens and direction.

The website will have many search features and will provide links to a number of existing websites. See appendix A for a listing of the websites that have already been identified. As more links become available they can easily be added. Databases can be easily searched and maintained electronically without assistance. In addition, DEQ as the web master would have the ability to pre-approve information and take and policing action to remove links or individuals not thought to be in the best interest of the program.

## **The WebSite:**

The website would be composed of five main areas

- 1) **“Talk to DEQ”**, which would offer a number or links to the DEQ website and the ability to email a question to DEQ headquarters or a regional office. Please look at <http://www.deq.state.va.us/homepage.html>
- 2) **“Resources”** which is a new data base of peers with environmental knowledge, expertise, or just general interest. – Someone who may be a resource for you. People could join the resource databases electronically. They would self declare their topic interest and declare their level experience. Individuals would be able to limit the information they want to provide such as phone number, email address, etc. Hopefully most people who register as mentors will participate as resources. The intent is to encourage peer to peer communication on environmental topics without the formal constraints of a mentoring environment. As an example this would give someone the opportunity to poll his or her peers to see if anyone has found a better method to dispose potentially recyclable material.

- 3) **“Mentoring”** would give one the opportunity to find out about people and Organizations who have made a commitment to help. Mentoring comes in many flavors; there are two well-established Mentoring program all ready in existence. A new program to promote Environmental Management Systems is being formed. Links to other mentoring groups can easily be added.

**A) Businesses for the Bay (B4B)** is the Chesapeake Bay Program’s voluntary pollution prevention program for businesses in the bay watershed. The program is designed to be flexible by allowing each business to develop their own P2 commitments, enabling them to set goals that make sense for their particular situation. Commitments range from educating employees P2 to changing a manufacturing process to reduce wastes. Many of the members have also become part of Business for the Bay’s Business-to-Business Mentoring Program, where volunteers offer their expertise to other businesses in need of technical assistance. Businesses for the Bay is a Regional Program in which Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Washington DC and the Chesapeake Bay Program participate.

B4B website address is - <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/bayprogram/pol/tsc/b4bay.htm>

**B) Small Business Assistance Mentoring** is currently under development and will be offered by DEQ Office of Small Business Assistance and the State Advisory Board on Air Pollution Control in a program that partners mentors with small businesses needing environmental assistance. The goal of this mentoring program is to provide technical assistance to small businesses seeking environmental guidance and compliance. The program will allow volunteers to help businesses determine which regulations apply to them. The volunteers would also help business to determine applicable permits, to complete registration forms and to classify hazardous waste. See the following address to visit their web site <http://www.deq.state.va.us/osba/smallbiz.html>

**C) Environmental Management System (EMS)** mentoring is in the process of being established. This mentoring group’s purpose will be to promote Environmental Management Systems in conjunction with VIP2 Environmental Excellence Program. Environmental Management Systems are formal management systems that promote practices that lead to better performance in addressing environmental issues. The mentors will be able give advice on lessons learned and how to develop an EMS program. This is a peer to peer program.

**D) Future Resources** – mentoring program that will be added as identified

- 1) **“Environmental Technology”** section will give information on Environmental Services Providers including technology exchanges, consultants, and universities. This would take advantage of numerous well-developed links already available.

<http://www.vesn.org/>,

<http://www.vpmep.org/>

<http://www.cit.org/>

And the DEQ links to University Programs at JMU, VCU, and Virginia Tech and other university.

- 2) **“Information – Self Help”** section will provide a variety of information by linking to existing websites. The majority of the information is or will be available off the DEQ homepage. Examples of the information that would be available are VIP2 Initiative, Environmental Excellence Program,” What is an Environmental Management System and Why Would I Want One”, Financial incentives for Pollution Prevention, Environmental Education, Glossary of Environmental terms, and Online Regulations.

### **Future Resources:**

Wastewater management is an important component of environment impacts. The Virginia Association of Municipal Wastewater Agencies (VAMWA) may be a key player in developing mentors and mentoring services for their customers and others regarding wastewater management.

One “quasi-mentoring” service that should be examined for development would be the use of graduate engineering programs in Virginia’s universities to respond to problems of specific clients. The problems would be identified by clients as a part of their own EMS process or in their work with a mentor. Such qualified problems should be sufficiently defined for a study team of graduate engineering students with a professor’s guidance to address the problem as a semester project. These university resources directed at a defined and relevant problem should yield valuable answers to clients asking the question. Also the university and the engineering departments should find such applied projects very beneficial to their students’ and their overall programs.

Finally, other subject areas for consideration to become additional mentor programs include stormwater management, wetlands, nonpoint sources/BMPs, and site remediation/brownfields.

### **Outreach:**

The Environmental Mentoring Initiative within DEQ’s VIP2 program should reach out in subtle ways to bring the clients needing assistance within reach of mentoring resources. Two approaches, the Internet and personal contact through meetings, seem worthwhile. The Internet provides a very non-threatening means for clients to find mentoring and other compliance assistance resources. It would seem appropriate for websites to be created by DEQ for the VIP2 program as well as the mentoring initiative. Also, it would be useful for the specific mentoring programs to develop web sites of their own. The sites for the mentoring programs, DEQ’s mentoring initiative and VIP2 should all be linked.

Personal Contact through meetings has the potential to be both informative and reactive. The reactive aspect means mentors from specific mentoring programs would be in attendance at the meetings. They could interact with invited guests who may need their services. Also, the mentoring programs would have displays or booths at the meetings to encourage prospective mentoring clients to inquire. The informative aspect would consist of the main content of the event.

Five types of meetings seem suitable for mentoring outreach activity, initially. First, Environment Virginia in Lexington during the spring each year is a very suitable setting to have mentors in attendance, mentoring programs on display, and prospective mentoring clients absorbing and responding to the messages from speakers or workshops.

Second, DEQ should conduct one series of meetings each year in its regional service areas. Content could include messages from the Secretary of Natural Resources or the DEQ Director in Richmond, but should include presentations by both regional and central office staff. Mentors in the region should be given every encouragement to attend. Mentoring programs should have the opportunity to display their programs. Prospective mentoring clients should be a part of the guest list.

Third, the new Virginia Environmental Excellence Program lends itself either to an annual meeting or a series of meetings. The topics and atmosphere may be dictated by recognition, awards, or EMS, but would be quite distinct from either the DEQ meeting topics or the theme of Environment Virginia. This meeting would also be a good forum to discuss progress of the mentoring program and consideration of new directions and changes for the program.

Fourth, the annual meeting of the State Advisory Board on Air Pollution in Virginia Beach would be another important gathering to facilitate interaction between prospective clients and mentors or mentoring programs. This event at times has coincided with professional meetings of environmental associations and this would be conducive to the desired interactions.

Fifth, investigation into trade association and other agency that could become a forum for outreach to communicate the environmental mentoring initiative.

The meetings should be dispersed through the year. The events should also represent diverse geographic opportunities around the Commonwealth.

### **Summary:**

This document provides a package of "mentoring initiative" that can be substantive, flexible and on target. The mentoring initiative needs to engage clients in a positive and non-threatening fashion. The mentoring initiative should provide time for the specific mentoring programs to gain some maturity from experience and success. New mentoring programs should be developed and added to the initiative. Modest marketing steps to begin the initiative will not limit the efforts that would be appropriate in two or three years.

## Appendix A - Existing Environmental Websites

<http://www.epa.gov/>  
<http://www.vesn.org/>  
<http://www.vpmep.org/>  
<http://www.cit.org/>  
<http://www.deq.state.va.us/homepage.html>  
<http://www.deq.state.va.us/p2/>  
<http://www.chesapeakebay.net/bayprogram/pol/tsc/b4bay.htm>  
<http://www.deq.state.va.us/p2/sites.html>  
<http://www.deq.state.va.us/osba/smallbiz.html>  
<http://es.epa.gov/elp>  
<http://www.smallbiz-enviroweb.org/>  
<http://www.epa.gov/smallbusiness/>

These are good examples of the wealth of information available on the Internet.